



## The Georgia Center of Innovation for Agribusiness Helped Turn a Perfect Recipe Into a Healthy Business

### OVERVIEW

Founded by Chief Batch-Maker Deana Bibb, a stay-at-home parent of twins whose pimento cheese recipe was the talk of the town, Proper Pepper was built on Bibb's hand-perfected recipe. Handmade with only the highest quality ingredients, Proper Pepper's Classic and Get Back Jack flavors have been making people in the Southeast rethink pimento cheese since 2015.

### CHALLENGE

From the recipe of a friend, that Bibb doctored up to make her own, she quickly became known as the Queen of Pimento Cheese. After seeing raving popularity with her family and friends, she was encouraged to start her own pimento cheese business. Starting any business can be tricky, but starting a food business comes with its own set of challenges. With no prior experience, Deana needed to learn all there was about starting a small food company. She needed to learn about federal and state regulations for operating a food business, safe processing, and product testing. She would also needed help finding space to use as a commercial kitchen for production, and also help with her nutrition facts labeling.

### SOLUTION

For the answers to her questions, Deana Bibb reached out to the Center of Innovation for Agribusiness. The Center, a value-added service of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, directed her to two separate Starting a New Food Business workshops offered jointly with the Center of Innovation and the University of Georgia in order to get a full introduction of what is necessary for the manufacturing of food. From there, the Center pointed Deana and Proper Pepper in the direction of UGA's Flavor of Georgia food contest, in which she took home first place in the dairy category less than a month after the commercial launch of her product.

### The significant connections include:

- Introduction to the Georgia Grown program
- Two Starting a New Food Business workshops to get a full introduction for what is necessary for the manufacturing of food
- Discussions about choosing a co-packer
- Introduction to commercial kitchen space at a local tech school

### Economic Impact:

- Officially in commercial production, Proper Pepper is currently in 35 retail outlets as well as several farmers markets and growing rapidly
- There are 584 active cottage food licenses in Georgia, with more added every day

### What the Center of Innovation for Agribusiness offers businesses within the Industry:

- Technical industry expertise, collaborative research and partnerships.
- Collaboration of leaders from academia, business and government to assist in the commercialization of new products, processes and business models.



The Center of Innovation for Agribusiness also introduced Proper Pepper to the Georgia Grown program, a marketing and economic development program of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. Since the launch of Proper Pepper in 2015, the Center of Innovation for Agribusiness has been working with Deana Bibb and Proper Pepper on finding commercial kitchen space for her rapidly growing business, as well as solving the logistical issues that arise when transporting large amounts of a perishable food item.

## RESULTS

Since the official commercial launch of Proper Pepper, the company has seen rapid growth. You can currently find both Classic and Get Back Jack flavors of Proper Pepper pimiento cheese in 35 stores and farmers markets statewide, and that number is growing rapidly.

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Whether it is determining the most accurate and appropriate thermometer I should purchase to do spot checking on my retailer's coolers or assessing an opportunity of how to add my product on a delivery truck with other chilled products, the Center is always eager to help with solutions. Anytime I meet other food artisans who have questions, my immediate answer is...call Sarah Cook at the Center of Innovation! ”

- Deana Tanner Bibb  
Founder, Proper Pepper Pimiento Cheese

